

ALL INCUMBENTS WIN PHOENIX CITY ELECTION, BUT LIGHT-RAIL EXPANSION IS REAL VICTOR

BY MIRIAM WASSER

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2015 | 12 HOURS AGO



An excited Mayor Greg Stanton discusses Prop 104.

Miriam Wasser

In what may turn out to be one of the least competitive **citywide elections** in Phoenix history, voters overwhelmingly reinstated Mayor Greg Stanton and four City Council members – Daniel Valenzuela, Thelda Williams, Bill Gates, and Michael Nowakowski – and passed all five ballot measures.

It was not a very impressive or shocking election: Voter turnout was low, and three out of the four city council members ran unopposed. Perhaps reflecting this, the results were

Phoenix city council members and supporters celebrating and, the results were unceremoniously announced about 7:45 p.m. at the “Team Stanton Election Night Party” at DeSoto Central Market in downtown Phoenix, a mere 45 minutes after the polls closed.

A few hundred people – a business-casual-meets-cocktail-party crowd – packed into the high-end food court to see the mayor speak, and the air was celebratory before the results were even known. If anyone drinking wine and eating mozzarella cheese balls on a stick doubted Stanton would win again, it didn’t show.

Shortly after 8:15, to cheers of “four more years,” Stanton and his family came down from their private room and addressed the crowd. While Nicole Stanton said that “four years ago we won an election, but tonight we won a validation” and talked at length about what a great person her husband is, the real celebrity of the evening – well, aside from the mayor’s 8-year-old son, who danced around the stage during a brief microphone malfunction and entertained the crowd – was Proposition 104.



The Stanton family

Miriam Wasser

Proposition 104, better known as the light-rail expansion ballot question, was a vote on whether the city should instate a 0.7 percent sales tax until 2050 to fund 42 new miles of light-rail tracks, more bus routes, and street improvement. In the lead-up to Tuesday’s results, Prop 104 was one of the only, if not the only, great unknown.

In general, **supporters of the measure** said it would grow the economy and help lower-income workers who cannot afford cars, while **the opposition** said it placed an unfair tax burden on the entire city, even though it would help only a small minority.

“With the population of Phoenix expected to continue growing in the next few decades,” explained Stanton, a supporter of light-rail expansion, “this is truly a historic night. We

[passed] an ambitious plan to build a robust and extensive public transportation system . . . and our city will never be the same again.”

Light-rail expansion “will have a huge impact for minority communities,” Felix Trejo, a Mesa Community College student at DeSoto Central Market event told *New Times*. “Without the light rail, I wouldn’t be able to go to college.” Trejo is studying landscape architecture and hopes to use his degree to help expand the family-owned landscaping business his father started.

“Look at all the great big cities, like L.A., New York City – they all have good public transportation systems,” said Jonathan Allen, a friend of Trejo's. “If [Phoenix is] the fifth-largest city in the county, we don’t have the public transportation system to show it.”



Miriam Wasser

While Trejo, Allen, the mayor, and the majority at the DeSoto Central Market party were excited that the proposition passed, not everyone viewed the election with such unabashed optimism.

“We’re the fifth-largest city in the country, and we have city council people running unopposed? And our mayor is practically running unopposed?” said a frustrated Reverend Jarrett Maupin, a civil rights leader who spent much of Tuesday helping shuttle people to voting stations. Maupin wants to see smaller districts, more minority representation, and a strong-mayor system.

“Stanton could be a great mayor, but he just doesn’t have the authority to do so. We need big britches, not training pants. This isn’t 1980 anymore. We’re number five in the country, and we need a system that is reflective of that.”



Miriam Wasser

Stanton ended his speech Tuesday night by saying that his election was about “all of us and our shared vision for a great city of Phoenix.” He added that “our time in life is short,, but our impacts can resonate on the future.”

How that future will play out – namely, who will win and lose with the approval of Prop 104 – remains to be seen.

“This [was] an exciting election, and a lot was at stake,” Maupin said. “Gentrification is going to happen, [and] as we continue to grow, I think that will be on people's minds.”





"This is a great night for the future of the city of Phoenix," a jubilant Mayor Stanton told the crowd.

Miriam Wasser

Contact:

Miriam Wasser

Follow:

Phoenix New Times

Phoenix New Times

Sponsor Content

This City Has Something For Everyone

Sponsor Content: Lincoln Motor Company

©2015 Phoenix New Times, LLC. All rights reserved.